

## Message Text

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PAGE 01 CAIRO 19370 211202Z  
ACTION NEA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY CAIRO  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2841

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E.O. 11652: NA  
TAGS: SHUM EG  
SUBJECT: CONGRESSIONAL INQUIRY RE REPORTED DESECRATION  
- OF CAIRO'S JEWISH CEMETERY

REF: STATE 194717

1. EMBOFFS MET WITH FELIX IZKAKI, PRESIDENT OF CAIRO'S JEWISH COMMUNITY, AT SYNAGOGUE AUGUST 19. IZKAKI DENIED EGYPTIAN GOVERNMENT HAS ANY PLANS FOR CONSTRUCTION ON SITE OF JEWISH CEMETERY. RATHER, HE NOTED THAT FOR SEVERAL YEARS CEMETERY HAS BEEN DESECRATED BY INDIVIDUALS SEEKING BUILDING MATERIALS. HE EMPHASIZED INDIVIDUALS INVOLVED ARE NOT CONNECTED WITH GOVERNMENT. IZKAKI SAID HE HAD MET WITH MRS. SADAT, THE MINISTER OF INTERIOR, AND OTHER HIGH OFFICIALS TO SEEK GREATER PROTECTION FOR THE JEWISH CEMETERY BUT, UNFORTUNATELY, HAS NOTICED NO INCREASE IN POLICE SURVEILLANCE.

2. SUBSEQUENT TO THIS CONVERSATION, EMBOFF VISITED THE CEMETERY, WHICH IS THE SOUTHERN-MOST BURIAL AREA IN CAIRO'S VAST NECROPOLIS. THE JEWISH BURIAL SITES STRETCH FOR OVER ONE MILE ON THE EDGE OF THE DESERT SOUTHEAST OF THE CAPITAL. AS IS THE CUSTOM HERE, MANY OF THE TOMBS ARE ELABORATE AFFAIRS CONSISTING OF SEVERAL ROOMS. THE SITES ARE NOT CONTIGUOUS AND THERE ARE, IN  
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EFFECT, A SERIES OF JEWISH CEMETERIES. MOST ARE NEITHER WALLED, NOR FENCED.

3. THERE IS NO EVIDENCE OF OFFICIAL CONSTRUCTION UNDERWAY, OTHER THAN A SINGLE ROAD BEING BUILT BETWEEN TWO TOMB AREAS, WHICH DOES NOT APPEAR TO AFFECT ANY GRAVES. THERE IS EVIDENCE THAT STONES FROM A LARGE NUMBER OF

GRAVES HAVE BEEN "QUARRIED" FOR BUILDING MATERIAL. (THIS IS AN AGE-OLD PROBLEM CONFRONTED BY MEMBERS OF ALL EGYPTIAN RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES.)

4. THE CEMETERY IS LOCATED BETWEEN A SPRAWLING SLUM, NEWLY ERECTED UPPER MIDDLE CLASS APARTMENT HOUSES, AND SEVERAL FACTORIES CONSTRUCTED IN THE DESERT BEYOND THE BURIAL AREAS. MANY OF THE ABOVE GROUND TOMBS ARE OCCUPIED BY SQUATTERS--IN RECENT YEARS, APPROXIMATELY A QUARTER MILLION SQUATTERS HAVE MOVED INTO CAIRO'S NECROPOLIS AS A RESULT OF THE CITY'S ACUTE HOUSING SHORTAGE. THE JEWISH CEMETERY IS SOMEWHAT MORE DILAPIDATED THAN THE NEIGHBORING MUSLIM AND CHRISTIAN BURIAL AREAS, BUT THIS SEEMS MORE A FUNCTION OF THE DECREASED SIZE OF THE JEWISH COMMUNITY (AND ITS INABILITY TO CARE FOR ITS CEMETERY) THAN BECAUSE OF ANY SPECIFIC DESECRATION. EMBOFF DID NOT SEE ANY OVERT POLICE SURVEILLANCE, BUT ADEQUATE PROTECTION WOULD BE EXTREMELY DIFFICULT TO PROVIDE, IN ANY CASE, GIVEN THE SIZE OF THE AREA, ITS LOCATION, AND THE LACK OF ROADS AND LIGHTING.

5. IN VIEW OF IZAKI'S DENIAL THAT GOE IS ENGAGED IN CONSTRUCTION ACTIVITY AT CEMETERY, WE SEE NO BASIS OR REASON FOR INQUIRING OF GOE (AS SUGGESTED PARA 3 REFTTEL) ABOUT WHAT APPEARS TO BE ERRONEOUS REPORT. FIVE POLAROID PHOTOGRAPHS TAKEN BY EMBOFF OF CEMETERY AND SURROUNDINGS LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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GIVING INDICATION OF GENERAL CONDITIONS OF AREA BEING POUCHED TO NEA/EGY.

6. CONGRESSMAN WILLIAM LEHMAN (D-FL) INTERESTED. EILTS

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NNN

## Message Attributes

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**Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Current Classification:** UNCLASSIFIED  
**Concepts:** PROPERTY PROTECTION, JEWS, CEMETERIES  
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**Disposition Comment:** 25 YEAR REVIEW  
**Disposition Date:** 20 Mar 2014  
**Disposition Event:**  
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**TAGS:** SHUM, EG  
**To:** STATE  
**Type:** TE  
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